

Traveling to Iraq

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Prepared by:
Iraq Investment and Reconstruction Task Force
U.S. Department of Commerce
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I. INFORMATION PERTAINING TO TRAVEL TO IRAQ

1. *Are U.S. citizens permitted to travel to Iraq?*

Yes. Related travel information is available in the U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Sheet for Iraq at travel.state.gov/iraq.html.

2. *Is it safe to travel to Iraq?*

The security environment in Iraq remains volatile and unpredictable. Although the restrictions on the use of U.S. passport travel to, in or through Iraq has been lifted, travel to Iraq remains extremely dangerous. The U.S. Department of State continues to strongly warn U.S. citizens against travel to Iraq.

Updated information on travel and security in Iraq may be obtained from the U.S. Department of State at travel.state.gov/iraq_warning.html or by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States, or, from overseas, 1-317-472-2328.

U.S. citizens who plan to travel to or remain in Iraq despite this Travel Warning should register with the United States Consular Office when traveling to Iraq. To do so, contact the United States Consular Officer, e-mail pboyd@usaid.gov or call 1-703-270-0210 or fax 1-703-270-0212. The Baghdad office is located on the ground floor of the Iraq Convention Center across from the al Rashid Hotel. It is open Saturday through Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Detailed security information is also available at <http://www.centcom.mil>. Security updates can also be e-mailed to you daily by requesting inclusion on an e-mail list compiled by the Iraq Assistance Center, at security.advisor@us.army.mil.

3. *Which security firms operate in Iraq?*

Certain security firms can provide bodyguards, hardened cars, due diligence on property and potential Iraqi business partners, and security for goods and buildings. The State Department's website provides a list of such firms at travel.state.gov/iraq_securitycompanies.html.

4. *Do you need a visa or permit to enter and travel through Iraq?*

Although you currently do not need a visa to enter Iraq, permits or other documents may be required for entry. Current regulations with respect to Iraqi borders, points of entry permits, and current Iraqi passports are contained in CPA Order #16 (www.iraqcoalition/regulations/index.html#Orders).

Visas are required for entry into Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Syria. American citizens may apply for entry into Kuwait or Jordan at any Kuwaiti and Jordanian Port-of-Entry without a visa. Most Americans entering Kuwait will be stamped into the country for 30 days each time they arrive. No invitation or supporting documentation is required to obtain a visa upon arrival in Kuwait or Jordan. There is no fee for the Kuwaiti visa, but visas authorizing stays in excess of 30 days will be subject to one Kuwaiti Dinar (approximately \$3 USD) fee per 30-day increment.

5. *What is the status of Iraq's airports?*

Presently, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) offers a charter flight several days a week from Amman to Baghdad for official travelers, DOD contractors, and journalists. There is limited commercial passenger service to the Baghdad airport. For more information, contact any Royal Jordanian Airlines ticketing office worldwide, or email iac.moveops@baghdadforum.com.

AirServ, working on a grant from the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID), offers 14 seats on flights from Kuwait and Amman to Baghdad for USAID and contractor personnel as well as other humanitarian and diplomatic organizations. For further information, please visit AirServ's website at www.airserv.org/.

6. *Where are the major points of entry into Iraq?*

Land ports of entry:

Northern Region: Ibrahim al-Khalil (Turkey)

Central Region: Ar-Ar (Saudi Arabia)
Trebil/Karamah (Jordan)

Southern Region: Safwan (Kuwait)

International airports:

Baghdad International Airport

Basra

Kirkuk (cargo)

Seaports:

Umm Qasr

Basra

7. *What should I keep in mind if I travel by vehicle from Jordan?*

Highway 1 from Jordan is a high-quality four-to six-lane road. Travel time is about 10 hours from Amman to Baghdad (4-5 hours from the border). It is extremely dangerous along this route and may be closed if there is military activity in Fallujah. Always travel in convoys. Private security firms may be utilized for travel along any route. Although fuel and convenience stores at rest stops on Highway 1 are generally functioning, plan to carry extra water, food and fuel to avoid non-critical stops. Gas prices range from \$5-\$10/100L.

8. *How do I travel from Turkey into Northern Iraq?*

The most convenient method of travel is to fly into either Istanbul or Ankara, then take a connecting flight on Turkish Airlines to the southeastern Turkish city of Diyarbakir. A bus service is available to take passengers to the Iraqi border (approximately a four-hour drive) and then onto Baghdad via Erbil and Kirkuk. Travel from the north to Baghdad by road is extremely dangerous. To assist with arrangements, contact travel agencies in Turkey.

9. *How do I travel from Kuwait to Basra?*

The known method of travel from Kuwait to Basra is by private vehicle (approximately a three-hour drive). Public bus service does not appear to be available. The two official border-crossing points that are open in Kuwait are Safwan/Abdali and Umm Qasr. The roads from Safwan to Baghdad are extremely dangerous. Individuals traveling to Iraq should consult the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Iraq at travel.state.gov/iraq.html.

10. *What health precautions should I take before traveling to Iraq?*

The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following vaccines:

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG);
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than six months, or be exposed through medical treatment;
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation;
- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region; and
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles, and a one-time dose of polio for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for

all infants and for children ages 11–12 years who have not completed the series.

Please visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov to obtain the latest information. You may obtain a list of Medical Providers in Iraq and Medical Information for Americans Overseas from the U.S. Consular Office by e-mailing asktheconsul@usconsulbaghdad.com. This office also provides a List of Security Companies Doing Business in Iraq, a Guide to Civil Military Operation Centers in Baghdad, and CPA Border Control Regulation 16.

11. Are hotels open in Iraq?

Hotels are open and operating on a cash-only basis (U.S. dollars or Iraqi dinars). Hotels in Baghdad have been targeted by suicide bombers. Many hotels provide their own security services. Visitors are advised to check with hotels on their security provisions. Taxi drivers can be expected to know their locations. Some hotels have onsite restaurants. The following hotels are located in Baghdad (unless noted), with approximate prices in U.S. dollars:

- Sheraton: \$70-80
- Al Hamra Hotel: \$70/night, , tel.# Country Code (Ex. U.S. 011) +964 1 778 1805
- Palestine Hotel: \$70/night, tel.# Country Code (Ex. U.S. 011) +964 1 747 0675
- Babylon Hotel: \$64/single and \$84/double, tel.# Country Code (Ex. U.S. 011) +964 1 778 1964
- Al Hammurabi: \$50
- Kindeel: \$45-50
- Cedar Hotel: \$90 for a flat
- Coral Palace: \$90/single and \$100/double, tel.# Country Code (Ex. U.S. 011) +88 216 2112 4455
- Sultan Palace: \$45-55
- Rimal Hotel: \$130
- Sebel Hotel - \$60
- In Kirkuk: Qasr Kirkuk: \$40

For additional hotel suggestions, please reference the CPA's pamphlet on doing business in Iraq at iraqcoalition.org/business_center.html.

12. Who can provide on-the-ground support with accommodations, logistics and transportation?

Many of the security firms listed on the State Department's website, travel.state.gov/iraq_securitycompanies.html, provide complete logistical services, including lodging in secure compounds within Iraq.

13. Are credit cards accepted?

Most hotels and shops accept only cash. Some small shops and restaurants will accept Visa credit cards by swiping the card onto a paper form. Foreign travelers must take caution: criminal elements are aware that they may be carrying comparatively high levels of cash.

14. What are the electrical frequency and current requirements for Iraq?

Iraq uses the 220 Volt and 50 or 60 Cycle. Iraq also uses a European plug configuration.

II. INFORMATION WHILE STAYING IN IRAQ**15. Is there a U.S. Embassy in Iraq? Are consular services available to U.S. citizens visiting Iraq?**

The United States plans to open a U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on July 1, 2004. Currently, emergency services for U.S. citizens are available in the Office of the United States Consular Office in Baghdad.

U.S. citizens who plan to travel to or remain in Iraq despite any Travel Warnings should register with the United States Consular Office when traveling to Iraq. To do so, e-mail asktheconsul@usconsulbaghdad.com or call 1-703-270-0210 or fax 1-703-270-0212. The office is located on the ground floor of the Iraq Convention Center across from the al Rashid Hotel. It is open Saturday through Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

While overseas you may obtain updated travel and security information on Iraq by visiting the Department of State website at travel.state.gov/iraq_warning.html or by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States, or, from overseas, 1-317-472-2328. Additional security updates can also be e-mailed to you daily by requesting inclusion on an e-mail list compiled by Steve Barnhart, Security Officer, Iraq Assistance Center, at security.advisor@us.army.mil.

16. Who should I call in case of any emergency?

CPA Force Protection has an emergency number (Iraqi line: 778-4088 and MCI: 112). Please call only in an emergency and they will do their utmost to assist.

17. What medical facilities are available?

Travelers should not assume that their insurance coverage is valid in Baghdad. Travelers are encouraged to verify the extent and validity of their insurance coverage while in Iraq prior to travel.

Medical care is available in Iraq through 240 public hospitals and 70 private hospitals, though Western standards are largely absent. All fees must be paid in cash.

According to the U.S. Consular Office in Baghdad, the best public hospitals in Baghdad are Al-Yermouk in Mansour, Al-Kindi on Palestine Street in 7th Nissan, and Al-Shaheed Adnan on Baba Muadham Street in Rusafa.

Private hospitals in Baghdad normally provide better care and service than public hospitals, but they have no emergency rooms and charge a higher fee. The best private clinics in Baghdad are al-Hayat on 52 Street in Karada, al-Rahebat in Karada, and Karkh hospital for surgery.

The best-known and well-stocked pharmacies in Baghdad with English-speaking pharmacists are Hunnudi and Al-Shaiklee.

You may obtain a list of Medical Providers in Iraq and Medical Information for Americans Overseas from the U.S. Consular Office by e-mailing asktheconsul@usconsulbaghdad.com.

18. Are telecommunication services available?

The total number of telephone subscribers in Iraq, including cell phone subscribers, is greater than the number of active subscribers pre-war. The majority of local landline telephone service is now operational in Baghdad. It is anticipated that full local service in Baghdad and nationwide landline connectivity will soon be restored. It is possible for international callers to reach most Iraqi telephone numbers, but there is limited international phone service from Iraq at this time.

The northern Iraqi cities of Dahook, Erbil and Sulaimaniya have reliable landline systems and very good mobile networks; though neither have international calling capability. The city of Kirkuk has a reliable landline system that connects to Baghdad.

International calling capability is being added to landline systems. The Thuraya and Iridium satellite systems are available for international telecommunications links. The Thuraya network has offices in Iraq.

Cell phones are now being distributed and the network, although still limited, is functioning. For information on specific telecommunication providers, please reference the CPA's pamphlet on doing business in Iraq at iraqcoalition.org/business_center.html.

Internet service is increasingly available through Internet cafes and hotels.

For business information on the telecommunications sector, please reference the U.S. Department of Commerce's Business Guide for Iraq at http://www.export.gov/iraq/business_climate/sector_overview.html#telecommunications.

19. What local or land transportation services are available in Iraq?

Many taxis are available in Baghdad. Army protocol recommends hailing a taxi that is passing by, not waiting (unless approved by the hotel). Try to retain the same taxi for return travel. Hotels can provide the names and phone numbers of legitimate car and driver services.

In northern Iraqi cities, taxis are widely available, reliable and inexpensive. They are available both as curbside service and by dispatch. The average fare is \$1 per kilometer, with most destinations in town costing no more than \$2. Car rentals are also available in the northern cities on a monthly lease basis. In Kirkuk, daily car rentals are available for \$50 per day.

Petrol stations in Baghdad have gas, but there can be long lines.

Related information is available in the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Iraq at travel.state.gov/iraq.html.

20. What currencies are accepted in Iraq?

As of October 15, 2003, new Iraq dinars replaced both the "Saddam" dinars used in southern Iraq as well as the "Swiss" dinars used in the north. The exchange period for the old currency concluded on January 15, 2004. The Iraqi dinar may be permitted to float in the international currency markets. As of April 1, 2004, 1,427 Iraqi Dinars were equal to approximately 1 U.S. dollars.

To guard against political or government interference, CPA Order #18 authorizes the Iraq Central Bank to set credit and monetary policies without requiring approval from the Ministry of Finance.

21. Can I wire money into Iraq?

Yes. Citibank in Amman offers a service that delivers cash to the doorstep of the beneficiary in Iraq (tel. # Country Code (U.S. it is 011) +962 6 567 5100). Some U.S. Army personnel and foreign officials use the Export & Finance Bank (tel. # Country Code (U.S. it is 011) + 962 6 569 4250) in Amman, Jordan, which provides money transfer services in cooperation with Baghdad Bank.

Visa International entered into an agreement with Rafidain Bank to allow the bank to make electronic fund transfers among its branches throughout the country. A list of private banks operating in Iraq and possibly providing this service is available from the CPA website at www.iraqcoalition.org.

U.S. Department of Commerce
Iraq Investment and Reconstruction Task Force
Website: www.export.gov/iraq
Tel: 1-866-352-4727 (toll-free); (202) 482-3011
Fax: (202) 482-0980
E-mail: IraqInfo@mail.doc.gov

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